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Visual Traces of Struggle for Dominance in The Western Mediterranean on Foreign Policy: Reflections of The Franco-Dutch War (1672-1678) in Sicily

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Abstract

The Mediterranean Basin has been the starting point of many civilizations since prehistoric times. The political, commercial, economic, and cultural activities carried out in this region for centuries have played an important role in the states trying to dominate this region. Especially, the Eastern and Western Mediterranean basins on both sides of the north-south transition, on which Sicily is located, have formed a strong field of struggle throughout history. Sicily, the largest island of the Mediterranean, has witnessed the wars of many

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states with its position as a crossroads. One of them is the Franco-Dutch Struggle between 1672-1678. The battles of Messina, Stromboli, Augusta, and Palermo, which formed the Sicilian front of the war between 1674 and 1676, reveal the richest visual data of the race for dominance in the Western Mediterranean. Because these encounters are highly significant for the future of the Mediterranean, especially following the Battle of Lepanto. The aim of the article is to present the established dominance at this point through visual evidence. What is important here is that painters, by creating a pictorial template from evolving images due to shifting power dynamics, have applied this to scenes of warfare. Moreover, a crucial aspect is that these works have been produced in a contemporary timeframe alongside the battles. Furthermore, these paintings have not only served as pieces of art but also as political tools. In this article, the identified war scenes are discussed in a chronological order, without emphasizing technical distinctions. This way, symbolic connotations that revive the prideful aspect of the achieved victory are attempted to be brought back to memory. To a certain extent, the visual representation of the sentiment of heroism directed towards the past is highlighted, focusing on pictorial indicators.

Keywords: Mediterranean, Franco-Dutch War, Sicily, Palermo, Visual Documents.

Batı Akdeniz'deki Hâkimiyet Mücadelesinin Görsel İzleri: Fransa-Hollanda Savaşı'nın (1672-1678) Sicilya'daki Yansımaları

Öz

Akdeniz Havzası, tarih öncesi çağlardan itibaren birçok medeniyetin çıkış noktası olmuştur. Asırlardan beri bu bölgede yürütülen siyasi, ticari, ekonomik ve kültürel faaliyetler, buraya hâkim olmaya çalışan devletler için önemli rol üstlenmiştir. Özellikle de Sicilya'nın üzerinde bulunduğu kuzey-güney geçişinin iki yakasındaki Doğu ve Batı Akdeniz havzaları, tarih boyunca güçlü bir mücadele alanı oluşturmuştur. Akdeniz'in en büyük adası olan Sicilya, kavşak noktası durumundaki konumuyla pek çok devletin savaşına tanıklık etmiştir. Bunlardan biri de 1672-1678 yılları arasında yaşanan Fransa-Hollanda mücadelesidir. Savaşın 1674-1676 yılları arasındaki Sicilya cephesini oluşturan Messina, Stromboli, Augusta ve Palermo muharebeleri, Batı Akdeniz'deki hâkimiyet yarışının en zengin görsel verilerini ortaya koymaktadır. Çünkü bu karşılaşmalar, İnebahtı Deniz Muharebesi'nden sonra Akdeniz'in geleceği açısından oldukça önemlidir. Makalenin amacı da bu noktada elde edilen hakimiyetin, görsel belgeler vasıtasıyla ortaya konulmasını sağlamaktır. Burada önemli olan sanatçıların, değişen güç dengesiyle farklılaşan imgeler üzerinden

resimsel bir kalıp oluşturarak, bunu savaş sahnelerine uygulamış olmalarıdır. En önemlisi de yapıtların, yaşanan muharebelerle çağdaş bir zaman diliminde meydana getirilmesidir. Üstelik bu resimler, bir sanat eseri olmalarının yanı sıra politik bir araç görevi de üstlenmişlerdir. Bu makalede de tespit edilen savaş sahneleri, tekniksel ayırım gözetilmeden kronolojik bir sırayla ele alınmıştır. Böylelikle kazanılan zaferin gurur verici yönünü destekleyen simgesel çağrışımlar hafızalarda canlandırılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bir bakıma geçmişe yönelik kahramanlık duygusunun görsel anlamdaki temsili vurgulanarak, resimsel göstergeler üzerinde durulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akdeniz, Fransa-Hollanda Savaşı, Sicilya, Palermo, Görsel Belgeler.

Introduction

The Mediterranean Basin has been the starting point of many civilizations since prehistoric times. The political, commercial, economic, and cultural activities carried out in this region for centuries have played an important role in the states trying to dominate this region. Especially, the Eastern and Western Mediterranean basins on both sides of the north-south transition, on which Sicily is located, have been a strong field of struggle throughout history.¹ Sicily, the largest island of the Mediterranean, has witnessed the wars of many states with its position as a crossroads. One of these was the Franco-Dutch War, also known as the Dutch War, between 1672 and 1678.

The struggle process, which started with the declaration of war by France against the United Netherlands Republic on May 28, 1672, witnessed major battles until 1678.² Although this successful advance of the French together with the British alliance pushed the Spanish Netherlands to resist from land and sea, this situation did not last long. Moreover, the next phase of the war continued on Sicily. Messina, one of the most important military bases in the region, in this war, is very important. Because the city, located on the northeast end of Sicily Island, on the Strait of Messina, was among the largest cities in Europe

¹ Fernand Braudel, *Akdeniz ve Akdeniz Dünyası 2*, İstanbul, 1990, p.78-79.

² John A. Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV 1667-1714*, London, 2013, p.113.

at that time.³ During the years of the Franco-Dutch War, it continues its power under Spanish rule. For this reason, it is one of its main goals to leave the administration to which it is affiliated and to become one of the largest maritime republics in the region. The Spanish government took action to neutralize this power. This situation especially dragged the people of Messina into a great struggle while it caused disagreements between some cities on the island.⁴ These events led to an uprising that turned into anti-Hispanic after a while. In this revolt, which started in July 1674, many steps were taken to protect the city against Spanish rule. One of them was the proposal of the Sicilian-French alliance applying to the King of France Louis XIV (reg. 1643-1715).⁵ The first step of this alliance was the aid to Messina by the French navy fleet under the command of Louis Victor de Rochechouart (1636-1688), Duke of Vivonne.⁶ This support was the main reason for the opening of a second naval front on the Mediterranean during the Franco-Dutch War.⁷

First Traces of The Franco-Dutch War in the Western Mediterranean: Messina Struggle

The first battle of the Franco-Dutch War on the Mediterranean took place on the date of February 11, 1675, off the Port of Messina. The battle was fought between the French navy under the command of Louis Victor de Rochechouart, Duke of Vivonne, and the Spanish ships under the administration of Melchior Fernández de la Cueva (1625-1686).⁸ Although the wind that came out during the conflict was initially in favor of the Spanish, the delays after a while in the maneuvers of the French galleys reversed the war. Rochechouart, who received the

³ Salvatore Bottari, "The Port of Messina, 1591-1783", *Making Waves in the Mediterranean Sulle onde del Mediterraneo: Proceedings of the 2. MMHN Conference*, eds. M. D'Angelo et al., Istituto di Studi Storici, Messina 2010, p.637-638.

⁴ Saverio Di Bella, *Caino Barocco Messina e la Spagna 1672-1678*, Cosenza 2010, p.20-24.

⁵ Lynn, *op. cit.*, p.143.

⁶ Léon Guérin, *Histoire Maritime de France*, Paris, 1848, p. 487-488.

⁷ Spncer C. Tucker (eds.), *A Global Chronology of Conflict: From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East I*, Santa Barbara, 2010, p.655; Michèle Battesti, "La France Navale Entre Atlantique et Méditerranée", *Dans Stratégique*, 109/2, 2015, p.73-99.

⁸ Guérin, *op. cit.*, p.257-258.

support of French Admiral Abraham Duquesne (1610-1688) in the struggle that lasted 4 hours, achieved a great victory as a result of his efforts. Moreover, the victory of Rochechouart ensured his appointment as the Governor of Sicily.⁹ At the end of the war, the French fleet, which entered the Port of Messina with great pride, thus gave the signals of the new political power in the region. The first visual document of this struggle appeared in an engraving drawn by German engraver *Johann August Corvinus* (1683-1738) and colored by *Jeremias Wolff* (1683-1724) (Image 1). This work, which is titled *The Capture of Messina by the French Fleet, February 11, 1675*, brings to mind at first the Battle of Stromboli as of the specified date.

The Battle of Stromboli in the picture takes place close to the Port of Messina. Johann August Corvinus probably described what happened in the last moments of the battle here. Above the sea, which it shows from a wide angle, a great conflict is taking place between the two sides, especially in the left front plane.



⁹ Louis-Victor-Leon Rochechouart, *Memoirs of the Revolution, the Empire and the Restoration*, ed. A. Mikaberidze, Tbilisi, 2019, p.1.

Image 1. Johann August Corvinus-Jeremias Wolff, The Taking of Messina by the French Fleet, February 11, 1675, 1700, Colorized engraving, Private Collection¹⁰

Ships placed close to the city must belong to the French Navy. Because, as stated in the historical records, the French managed to enter the Port of Messina at the end of the struggle.¹¹ The military, religious, and civil architecture of the city is depicted behind the composition. Santissimo Salvatore Castle is located in a way to form a curve back from the tip of the nose extending towards the sea. These walls were reinforced with towers placed at intervals. The defense structure, which plays a very active role in naval wars in order to control the port entrance, extends to the foothills of the mountains. Thus, while the painter emphasized the strategic importance of the region, he also provided visual evidence of the naval battles of the period.

Historical Descriptions of the Battles Of Stromboli and Augusta

The success of the French navy in Messina was repeated a year later. On January 8, 1676, this time the struggle against the Spanish Netherlands took place off the island of Alicudi (Alicuri) in the north of Sicily.¹² The French, who were exposed to the fierce fire of the Spanish-Dutch navy under the command of Michiel de Ruyter, managed to break through the enemy line thanks to their quick maneuvers. The ships, which were behind the battlefield, continued their struggle against each other by taking advantage of this situation. In the battle that lasted 6 hours, the sides could not gain superiority against each other, despite using the advantage of the wind tactically.¹³ At the end of the war, the Spanish-Dutch fleet was withdrawn to Palermo, while the French ships moved towards Messina.¹⁴ The first visual document of this struggle appeared in a work of Dutch engraver Jacobus Robijn (1649-1707) (Image 2).

¹⁰ <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e0/66/de/e066de0d850502545593bdeedd136030.jpg>.

¹¹ H Martin, *Martin's History of France: 1661-1683*, Accrington, 1865, p.428.

¹² R.G. Grant, *Battle at Sea: 3000 Years of Naval Warfare*, London, 2010, p.144.

¹³ David S.T. Blackmore, *Warfare on the Mediterranean in the Age of Sail: A History, 1571-1866*, McFarland, 2014, p.98.

¹⁴ Richard Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare, 1650-1830*, London 1999, p.28.

The engraving dated 1676 was made in a contemporary time with the Battle of Stromboli off Alicudi Island. Robijn, who was working mostly on navigational charts used in the seas, sometimes produced engravings also about the important naval battles of the period.¹⁵ He probably made this work on an order. Here he described the struggle between the French fleet and the Spanish-Dutch navy ships against each other. He painted the ships that he placed on the sea in groups in close combat order. The most striking aspect of engraving is that it provides the viewer with the opportunity to establish a text-image relationship. The text table added just below the depiction contains explanatory information about the war that is the subject of the picture. From the battle route to the ships used and from the way to be followed at the time of the collision to the battle order, all the moments of the struggle were written in detail on the panel arranged in Dutch in four columns. Thus, the painter revived the narrative in the text on the engraving. He also added an inscribed pennant carried by the puttos just in the middle of the sky. Here is *a statement in the form of a picture of the naval battle between the French and Dutch fleets on January 8, 1676, near Palermo on the island of Sicily.*

¹⁵ Günter Schilder and Marco van Egmond, "Maritime Cartography in the Low Countries During the Renaissance", *The History of Cartography: Cartography in the European Renaissance*, ed. David Woodward, Chicago, 2007, p.1401.



Image 2. Jacobus Robijn, Battle of Stromboli (1676), 1676, Gravure, 452 x 493 mm, Amsterdam Rijksmuseum / RP-P-OB-82.439¹⁶

King Charles II of Spain (reign 1665-1700), Prince William III of the Netherlands (reign 1672-1689), and France's coat of arms are placed on both sides of the angels as symbols of the parties participating in the war. In order not to cause further confusion, the painter added letters or numbers on the ships and made matches with the writing plate. It is possible to see a similar example of this on the Lipari Islands behind the composition. Each island of Stromboli, Alicudi, Filicudi, and Sicily is named as. However, according to the information obtained from written sources, the point where the war took place is the region between Alicudi and Filicudi Islands.¹⁷ The artist changed the order while naming these islands. In other words, it showed the location where the struggle took place from a different perspective and misled the audience geographically.

Jacobus Robijn's work has an arrangement that requires depicting the battlefield from a wide angle. But in 1698, the Dutch engraver *Jan Luyken's* (1649-1712) engraving of the Messina Naval Battle (Image 3), 1676 is like a detail taken from Robijn's painting. The close combat of

¹⁶ www.rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-82.439.

¹⁷ Blackmore, *op. cit.*, p.98.

the two galleons in the center of the composition is particularly striking. Luyken realistically portrayed the moment of the event. He photographed the soldiers in the lifeboats that he placed on the left of the scene, giving instructions to the distant ships with war horns. The mountain behind was actually inactive during the war years. However, it is quite interesting that Jan Luyken draws attention to the moment of the explosion here. He probably resorted to such a practice to show which battle the subject he painted belonged to. Therefore, the subject depicted is not the struggle in Messina. The presence of the volcano here brings to mind the Battle of Stromboli.¹⁸ The date of 1676 also proves this.



Image 3. Jan Luyken, Naval Battle of Messina 1676, 1698, Gravure, 111 x 158 mm, Amsterdam Rijksmuseum / RP-P-1896-A-19368-1554¹⁹

A similar practice was also attempted by the French painter *Théodore Gudin* (1802-1880) (Image 4). Since 1830, the artist has been the official painter of the French navy with the title of *Peintre de la Marine*. He probably painted his oil painting, which he completed in 1854, at a time when the Emperor of France Napoleon III (reg.1852-

¹⁸ Gianfilippo De Astis et al., "The Aeolian Volcanic District: Volcanism and Magmatism", *Acta Vulcanologica* 18/1-2 (2006), p.79-104.

¹⁹ <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-1896-A-19368-1554>.

1870) was undertaking the court painter. His purpose is to document the supremacy of the French navy in the Mediterranean.



Image 4. Théodore Gudin, Battle of Stromboli 8 Ocak 1676, 1854, Oil on canvas, 59 x 81.3 cm, Private Collection²⁰

The two big ships that Théodore Gudin placed in the center of the picture should belong to the French Commander Abraham Duquesne and the Dutch Admiral Michiel de Ruyter. Its sails, which swell with the effect of the wind, show that the war was fought in stormy weather. The ships behind, depicted in silhouette, were also involved in the struggle. The lifeboats scattered in different directions serve as life rescuers. They are probably trying to reach the people who survived the sinking boat in the right corner of the picture. Smoke rising over the ships documents that the war was fierce. The island in the center of the painting is positioned to divide the composition into two. It is the island of Stromboli, after which the battle is named. The striking detail here is the presence of the volcano that bears the same name as the island. The mountain, which is depicted in an erupted state, was inactive during the war years. But Théodore Gudin's depiction of the moment of explosion,

²⁰www.artnet.com/artists/baron-jean-antoine-th%C3%A9odore-gudin/battle-of-alicudi-off-stromboli-8th-january-1676-pWq8VOR4mxJJdBC_t3yp8w2.

like Jan Luyken, is a reference to the Battle of Stromboli. Moreover, according to historical sources, the war took place not on the coast of Stromboli, but off the coast of Alicudi Island.



Image 5: Nicolas Bonnart, Siege of Bouchain, detail: Battle of Augusta, 1677, Gravure, 819 x 545 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France / FRBNF40463342²¹

²¹ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69454190/f1.highres>.

The inability to get a result from the Battle of Stromboli brought both sides face to face again on April 22, 1676.²² This time the battle took place off the coast of Augusta, in the province of Syracuse, on the east coast of Sicily. There were a lot of casualties in the short but fierce battle. One of them is the death of Michiel de Ruyter, who was at the head of the Spanish-Dutch navy. The Admiral, who was seriously injured by the bullet that hit his leg, died a week later.²³ Despite all these developments, France was the party that gained a strategic advantage at the end of the war²⁴. However, no results were obtained from the battle. One of the visual documents produced a year or so after the struggle came from the hand of the French painter Nicolas Bonnart (1637-1718) (Image 5).

The engraving in one of the almanacs prepared for King of France Louis XIV is actually about the Siege of Bouchain dated May 12, 1676. The focal point of the painting is a group of French soldiers advancing on their horses toward the battlefield. These people are commanders of the battle; Louis de Crévant, François d'Aubusson de La Feuillade, Duke of Orléans Philippe I, and French General Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban. Behind them, the siege operation of the French army towards the city is depicted. One of the remarkable applications here is the medallions placed at the four corners of the composition in question. Its interior is embellished with the sieges of Maastricht, Augusta, Condé, and Aire, which Louis XIV was victorious in during the Franco-Dutch War. The name and date of the struggle in French are written on the medallion, which depicts the Battle of Augusta, in the upper right corner. At the same time, the withdrawal of the Spanish and Dutch navies from the battle is mentioned here. Thus, the audience was informed about the winner of the war. The depiction on the medallion corresponds to the text. The front plane of the picture consists of allied ships performing the moment of retreat. The background offers a view of the Augusta settlement. Nicolas Bonnart showed here the attacks on the port side of the city. The smoke coming out of the fort at the entrance of the Port of Augusta and spreading to the city was visual

²² Blackmore, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

²³ Rif Winfield-Stephen S. Roberts, *French Warships in the Age of Sail, 1626-1786: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates*, Philadelphia 2017, p.15.

²⁴ Lynn, *op. cit.*, p.148.

proof of the violence of the conflict. Reflecting the moment of the event on his canvas with a realistic point of view, the artist depicted in a documentary style the architectural structure of the city, the geographical location of the city, and the military operation.

French artist *Sébastien Leclerc* (1637-1714), who depicted the war with a more static view than *Nicolas Bonnard's* engraving, depicted the area where the struggle took place in a more accurate position (Image 6). Historical sources also mention that the collision took place at this point. Leclerc's easy access to such sources has a great impact on this. Because the artist worked for Louis XIV from 1672 until his death. He made many engravings about the military achievements of the king.²⁵ The Battle of Augusta is one of them. However, the struggle here is depicted with a calmer impression than expected. The scene, which was designed looking towards the Augusta Harbor, was prepared as a half bird's eye view. Probably the painter depicted the last minutes of the siege, the moments when the Dutch and Spanish navies began to retreat. Because the galleons on both sides are farther from the shore. In other words, the purpose of the painter here is to prove that the king of France has superior strategic knowledge in this region.

²⁵ Edouard Meaume, *Sébastien Le Clerc et son œuvre, 1637-1714: Ouvrage couronné par l'Académie de Metz, orné d'une eau-forte rare reproduite par Amand Durand et d'un fac-similé de l'écriture de Séb. Le Clerc*, Paris, 1877, p.78; Louis Bertrand, *Vie, Écrits et Correspondance Littéraire de Laurent Josse le Clerc*, Paris, 1878, p.2-4.



Image 6. Sébastien Leclerc, *Battle of Augusta*, 1686, Gravure, 436 x 374 mm, The British Museum / 1940,0511.105²⁶

Among the visual witnesses of the Battle of Augusta is the oil painting of the French marine painter *Ambroise Louis Garneray* (1783-1857) (Image 7). The artist, who was also a sailor, was taken prisoner by the British during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815). After his release in 1814, he devoted his life to painting. Like Théodore Gudin, he was also among the first official painters of the French navy.²⁷ He has focused on naval warfare throughout his career. The painting of the artist, who produced her works for the orders of Napoleon Bonaparte (reign 1804-1815) and her entourage, about the Battle of Augusta is one of them.

²⁶ www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1940-0511-105.

²⁷ Henry Ottley-Michael Bryan, *A Biographical and Critical Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, from Cimabue and Finiguerra to the Present Time*, London 1875, p.75.



Image 7. Ambroise Louis Garneray, Battle of Augusta, 1834-1836, Oil on canvas, 142 x 227 cm, Palace of Versailles / MV 1394²⁸

The oil painting dated between 1834-1836 depicts the struggle of France and the Dutch-Spanish navy against each other. The French flag galleon in the center of the stage divides the stage into two. It is surrounded by allied ships. The artist depicts the movement in the middle of the sea with a powerful expression. Especially in the foreground of the composition, the soldiers waiting to be rescued on a ship on a fire show the frightening side of war. Some even try to go down to the sea with the help of ropes to get rid of this fire. The fearful expressions and hasty escapes that are reflected on their faces already document this situation. The position of the ships and their sails reminds us once again of the force of the wind. The smoke rising above them emphasized the dramatic side of the war. This turned the picture into a realistic but gloomy look. Moreover, this work is one of the few oil paintings depicting the struggle of the Franco-Dutch War in the Mediterranean.

²⁸ <http://collections.chateauversailles.fr/#97e809fa-5cd0-4da5-a193-7f6236b6129a>.

The Final Phase of the Struggle for Superiority in the Western Mediterranean: Visual Witnesses of The Battle of Palermo

The last battle in the Mediterranean in the 4th year of the Franco-Dutch War was the Battle of Palermo. This struggle, which took place on June 2, 1676, is very important both for the outcome of the Franco-Dutch War and for the future of the Mediterranean.²⁹ The Dutch, who anchored their ships in the Port of Palermo, encountered the French navy under the command of Admiral Abraham Duquesne when they were not yet ready for war.³⁰ Duquesne's plan is to create panic, first among the Spanish and then Dutch ships. He achieved this by sending fireships against the enemy navy. Thus, the Spanish galleys suffered heavy damage. While many ships caught fire during the war, the crew inside was buried in the waters of the Mediterranean as a result of the explosion caused by the firearms. The fire endangered the city of Palermo as well.³¹ Despite everything, the French, who survived the battle with small losses, became the winner of the war again.

The Battle of Palermo was recorded as one of the biggest naval wars ever fought in Sicily and its surroundings.³² Thus, it was proved to the world who the state that dominated the Western Mediterranean in the 17th century was. For this reason, the visual documents of the Franco-Dutch War on the Mediterranean front are mostly shown in the Battle of Palermo. For example, this subject is frequently encountered in the engravings that adorn the pages of some almanacs prepared for Louis XIV. One of them was produced by the French engraver *Nicolas de Larmessin II* (1632-1694) (Image 8).

²⁹ Michael Palmer, *Command at Sea: Naval Command and Control Since the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge 2005, p.67; Cathal J. Nolan, *Wars of the Age of Louis XIV, 1650-1715: An Encyclopedia of Global Warfare and Civilization*, London 2008, p.352.

³⁰ Michel Vergé-Franceschi, *Abraham Duquesne: Huguenot et Marin du Roi-Soleil*, France 1992, p.277.

³¹ Blackmore, *op. cit.*, p.99-100; Nolan, *op. cit.*, p.52; Onésime Joachim Troude, *Batailles Navales de la France*, Paris 1867, p.150, 155-157.

³² Guy Le Moing, *Les 600 Plus Grandes Batailles Navales de l'Histoire*, France 2011, p. 620.



Image 8. Nicolas de Larmessin II, *Les actions héroïques de Louis le Grand en l'année M.DC.LXXXIV*, detail: Battles of Augusta and Palermo, 1677, Gravure, 815 x 526 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France / FRBNF40274857³³

In fact, the artist wanted to introduce the achievements of Louis XIV in painting from Flanders to Sicily. One of the three medallions carried by the angels in the upper left corner of the engraving is about the battles of Augusta and Palermo. Above the depiction, there is a text of

³³ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69454190/f1.highres>.

explanation in the form of *the great victories of Louis Victor de Rochechouart, Duke of Vivonne, against the Dutch and Spanish in Augusta and Palermo in Sicily*. Their names were written on both struggles separately. In the picture; The Battle of Augusta is fought in front of the port, and the Battle of Palermo is fought off Castellammare, which guards the port's entrance. Working on the moving battle scene, Larmessin reflects all the complexity of the struggle. There are gunships between the galleons that fight each other at very close range. In addition, the artist, taking into account the information in historical sources, brought the flames from the ships closer to the city.

The same struggle is depicted in the engraving of the French engraver *Nicolas Langlois* (1640-1703) (Image 9). But here a calmer outlook prevails. The artist described the struggle in accordance with the tradition of topographic painting. Especially the view of the city at the back has the value of a visual document in terms of its period.



Image 9. Nicolas Langlois, Lifting the Siege of Maastricht, detail: Battle of Palermo, 1677, Gravure, 820 x 532 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France / FRBNF40463311³⁴

Nicolas Bonnard, who depicted the moment of war more closely in Nicolas Langlois' engraving, depicted the Battle of Palermo in his engraving of the Siege of Bouchain (Image 10). The fight scene has been added to the rectangular panel below the calendar on the almanac

³⁴ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6945413h/f1.highres>.

page. Ships on the shore are trying to surround the city from the sea. The smoke surrounding them documents the violence of the conflict. Some of the galleons, which were blown sideways by the effect of the wind, try to maintain their balance on the sea. There is a French text just above the composition. The history of the battle, how it happened, the lost ammunition, and the winning side are explained here. However, one of the remarkable statements in this article is the comparison made with the Battle of Lepanto.³⁵ Because it is written here that *Palermo was the most terrible war for the defeated and the most glorious for the winners among the struggles at sea after the Naval Battle of Lepanto, 1571*. Indeed, the Battle of Palermo is the biggest of the struggles in the Mediterranean after Lepanto. That's why the victory achieved is celebrated with such pictures.



³⁵ In French text, "Combat Naul, Et la Victoire remportée le 2 Juin 1676. Par l'Armée du Roy / Commandé par le Ma. de Viceroy de Sicile ; Sur les flotes d'Espagne, et d'Holande. / Mouillées à la Rade de de Palermo. / Les Ennemis ont perdu dans ce Combat, douze de leurs plus grands Vaisseaux, quatre brulots, Six Galeres, Sept cent pieces de Canon, plus de cinq mil / hommes : Cette bataille a esté plus funeste aux Vaincus, et plus glorieuses aux Vainqueurs, qu'on en ayt donné sur la Mer, depuis la bataille de Lepante" is writing. The translation is "Combat Naval, And the Victory won on June 2. | me |, 1676. By the Army of the King. / Commissioned by the Viceroy Ma. of Sicily; On the Spanish and Dutch fleets. / Anchored at the Rade de Palermo. / The Enemies lost in this Combat, twelve of their largest Vessels, four brulots, Six Galleys, Seven hundred pieces of Cannon, more than five thousand / men: This battle was more fatal to the Vanquished, and more glorious to the Victors, that have been given on the sea since the battle of Lepante."

Image 10. Nicolas Bonnard, Siege of Bouchain, detail: Battle of Palermo, 1677, Gravure, 819 x 545 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France / FRBNF40463342³⁶

The main theme only consists of the moment of battle in some of the engravings in the almanacs of Louis XIV, which keep the memory of the Palermo Victory alive. For example, an engraving produced by the French engraver *Louis David* (1667-1718) depicts the most contentious moments of the struggle (Image 11). The artist conveyed what happened during the collision with a lively and crowded impression. At the top of the composition, the puttos bearing the Marshal Crest of the Duke of Vivonne also fly an inscribed pennant. Here is written a French phrase: *Naval battle-victory won before Palermo, June 2, King's Army under the command of the Governor of Sicily, Duke of Vivonne, Spanish and Dutch Fleets*. Encountering the battle scene, the audience can easily learn the history of the war, between whom and where it took place.

³⁶ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69454190/f1.highres>.



Image 11. Louis David, *Battle of Palermo and detail*, 1676-1677, Gravure, 814 x 534 mm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France / FRBNF40463281³⁷

Louis David has depicted the war moment from a broad perspective (Image 12). The unity of the painting is constituted by the struggle between the Spanish-Dutch flagged galleons and the ships of the French navy against each other. These ships, which occupy a large part of the composition, were numerous and included in all the chaos of the moment of conflict. The soldiers in them are depicted without going into too much detail. Each of them attacks the other side with arrows, bows, spears, and swords in their hands. The most important detail that

³⁷ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6945415b/f1.highres>.

draws attention here is the phrases attached to the sides of the ships. In these statements, the fleets belong to which navy, by whom it is commanded, etc. information has been shared.



Image 12. Detail from Louis David's gravure of the Battle of Palermo

The battle scene is limited to the city view in the background. In fact, the application in question was also used for city names. For example, *Palerme* is written on the left side, just above the area surrounded by star-shaped walls. The settlement, which faces the sea, exhibits a unique image with its religious and civil architecture, like the Palermo Cathedral, although it fights against fire. A similar view is also on the side of *Castellammare* in the middle of the Sicilian sea. In fact, the war has focused on this point. Especially what happened in front of the tower rising from the sea rocks on the right shows the intensity of the struggle.

Another striking detail in the scene is a soldier shown among the ships on the front plane (Image 13). Presumably, this person is a high-ranking admiral of the French army. But its anatomical structure is quite different. In particular, his hands holding swords and spears are shown larger than his body. The muscles in his arms can be felt even through his clothes. The artist must have referred to the Duke of Vivonne, Louis Victor de Rochecouart, who was at the head of the French navy thanks to this person he was portrayed as a commander.



Image 13. Detail from Louis David's gravure of the Battle of Palermo

The Battle of Palermo is also documented in a work by *Gérard Jollain* (active 1630s-1683), a member of the woodcut publishing family in France in the 18th and 19th centuries. The engraving, called *The Bloody Defeat of the Dutch and Spanish Fleets*, seems to have taken a detail from Louis David's engraving (Image 14). David's painting has a more complex battle scene. *Gérard Jollain's* engraving focuses only on one event in the struggle. The galleon belonging to the French navy that is located in the center of the picture dominates the scene in all its glory. On the surface of the nose on the side of the ship, a depiction of a king sitting on the throne is encountered. This suggests that the galleon was used by one of the navy admirals, perhaps under the command of Louis Victor de Rochecouart, Duke of Vivonne. Soldiers on other ships around it entered into this conflict with their weapons. In particular, they intensified their attacks with artillery. The moments when the galleon on the left, which could not withstand this attack, sank into the water are remarkable. The people inside are trying to be rescued with the help of lifeboats.



Image 14. Gérard Jollain, The Bloody Defeat of the Dutch and Spanish Fleets, 1676-1677, Gravure, 762 x 530 mm, Bibliothèque nationale de France / FRBNF40489820³⁸

Soldiers of two enemy armies attacking each other with weapons such as swords, spears, bows, and arrows are featured on the lifeboats on the front plane of the stage. Some of them fell into the sea due to the turmoil and are waiting to be rescued. These images, which reveal the frightening side of the war, show that the artist adheres to a realistic understanding of the description.

Pierre Puget (1622-1694) is one of the artists who revealed the violence of war with all its realism, like Gérard Jollain (Image 15). Puget, one of the leading figures of French Baroque painting, is also an architect and sculptor.³⁹ He painted his oil painting about the Battle of Palermo dated 1677, probably while dealing with the decoration of

³⁸ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6945411p/f1.highres>.

³⁹ Philippe Auquier, *Pierre Puget : Décorateur Naval et Mariniste*, Paris 1909, p.5.

French warships in Toulon. Perhaps this work is among his few war paintings.



Image 15. Pierre Puget, Naval Battle of Palermo, 1677, Oil on canvas, Private Collection⁴⁰

The artist designed his composition on a multi-figure and animated scheme in terms of its suitability for the war scene. He reflected on the moment of battle in the middle of the sea on his canvas from a broad perspective. In the middle plane of the composition, there are many ships scattered in various directions. But the interesting one among them is the arson ship in the right corner. The mass of smoke rising to the sky over it attracts all attention in this direction. Thus, the painter revealed the most violent moment of the struggle with all its strikingness. It is possible to see this effect in the work of another artist whose name cannot be determined (Image 16). Even the moment of collision between other ships has not been depicted this effectively. Puget provided a view of the city of Palermo to show where the battle took place. This picture, which documents that it is one of the largest ports in the Mediterranean with its structure, is very important in terms of showing the city panorama.

⁴⁰<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:CombateNavalDePalermo16760602PierrePuget1677.jpg>.



Image 16. Anonymous, A Painting about the Battle of Palermo⁴¹

Louis XIV's painter Sébastien Leclerc, who studied the Battle of Palermo from a broader perspective, provided the viewer to have a more comfortable command of the battlefield (Image 17).



Image 17. Sébastien Leclerc, Naval Battle of Palermo, 1686, Gravure, 437 x 373 mm, The British Museum /1940,0511.103

⁴¹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_of_Palermo_1676.jpg.

As in the Battle of Augusta, he used a similar style in this engraving he made in 1686. Although there was a war here, a more stable image was chosen. In fact, the artist has shown the ships, which he has placed in the sea side by side or in separate groups, in close warfare. This fiction, which is continued towards the background, is limited to the view of the city in the background. As stated in historical sources, the arson ships belonging to the French navy come up to the front of the city. In fact, the flames that spread into the city showed how Leclerc dominated the chronicles. In particular, the artist is quite dominant over the architecture in Castellammare, which controls the Port of Palermo. The defensive structure, separated from the sea by walls and towers, has been drawn in detail.



Image 18. Johann August Corvinus, Naval Battle of Palermo, 1730, Gravure, 269 x 301 mm, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum / 11

Leclerc, who also establishes a text-picture relationship in the engraving, wrote all the details of the war on the decorative frame under the picture. Thus, he left a visual document of his own period glorifying Louis XIV's achievements in Sicily. In fact, this painting was identically studied one hundred years later by the German engraver *Johann August Corvinus* (1683-1738). The battle scene, which differs

only with the change of direction, is a repetition of Sébastien Leclerc's engraving (Image 18).

Ambroise Louis Garneray, one of the first official painters of the French navy, also worked for the Battle of Palermo during the years when he painted the naval battle in Augusta (Image 19).



Image 19. Ambroise Louis Garneray, *Nocturnal Naval Battle*, Palermo, 31 May 1676, 1837, Oil on canvas, Chateau Musee de Dieppe, Inv. 960.2.23; 3901 (MD)⁴²

The fireballs from the ship in the center of the composition rise towards the sky. The galleys and galleons around them are experiencing a shocking moment with this explosion. The painter seems to have observed the collision directly. In fact, the same scene was repeated by the French painter *Jean Pierre Marie Jazet* (1788-1871) in 1843 (Image 20). But his work is described in the collection as the *Battle of Augusta*. From a historical perspective, it is a fact that he depicts the *Battle of Palermo*.

⁴² www.pop.culture.gouv.fr/notice/joconde/07120001263.



Image 20. Jean Pierre Marie Jazet, Battle of Augusta on the Sicilian Coast, 1676, 1843, Aquatinta, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Inv. 14614688⁴³

The Battle of Palermo is the final battle of the French and Dutch War of 1672-1678 over the western Mediterranean. Despite the passage of years, this struggle for dominance of France on the territory of Sicily has continued to be documented visually. An intense negotiation process started between the parties after that. As a result of the peace negotiations, a series of agreements were signed in Nijmegen, Netherlands between the years 1678 and 1679. The French troops began to withdraw from Sicily after this alliance, which did not last long. Therefore, there was Spanish domination in the region again until the 19th century. However, the effect of the Franco-Dutch War on the Western Mediterranean has an important place in terms of showing the visual documents of the struggles that took place in Sicily and its surroundings.

⁴³www.kulturpool.at/plugins/kulturpool/showitem.action?itemId=124554837390&ku poContext=default.

Conclusion

The battles of Messina, Stromboli, Augusta, and Palermo, which formed the Sicilian front of the Franco-Dutch War between 1674 and 1676, reveal the most important visual data of the struggle for dominance in the Western Mediterranean. The identified sixteen works involve the struggles in and around Sicily, the largest island in the Mediterranean. The operation, which was carried out in order to have the sea area of more regions, constitutes the main theme of the paintings. Most of these works were produced with engraving techniques. Only three of them are oil paintings. These works, which are depicted in a contemporary period of time with the wars, usually bear the signature of French artists.

In the war scenes, the painters depicting the process in which the French and Spanish-Dutch navy faced each other, always depicted galleys, galleons, and lifeboats in close combat. In all paintings, there is a collision between the crews. Therefore, it is possible to encounter a similar composition scheme from time to time. However, in some works, while the battles are depicted alone, sometimes they are shown together with other struggles. It is especially possible to encounter this practice in the engravings that adorn the pages of the almanacs prepared for Louis XIV. Examples of this are mostly seen in the battle scenes made by the French painters Nicolas Bonnart, Nicolas de Larmessin II, and Nicolas Langlois. In fact, the main theme of the works consists of land battles taken from the Franco-Dutch War. Often in the center of the paintings are the French commanders who left the war victorious. The insides of some medallions added to the four corners of the composition are decorated with the battles of Augusta and Palermo. Even the name and date of the struggle are written on them in French.

The importance of the struggle in some war scenes is emphasized with decorative text plates included in the picture. The writings on the composition undertake an explanatory task in this sense. Thus, the audience can access various information such as where and when the battle took place, how many hours the battle lasted, the number of soldiers, and the side that left the battle victorious. The purpose of the artists here is to determine the relationship of the scene with the text rather than the subjects they have chosen. Therefore, they revived the

narrative on the plates through pictures, and placed the subject they were dealing with in an iconographic pattern in accordance with the text. In order not to cause confusion in the composition, they sometimes added letters or numbers on the ships and matched them with the writing plates. Sometimes, with words written on the sides of the ships, they showed which navy the fleet belonged to or by whom it was commanded. Thus, it became easier to establish a text-image relationship.

Apart from literary applications, the most important feature that adds documentary value to the pictures is the city images added to the war scene. Because various views are shared from the settlements of Messina, Stromboli, Augusta, and Palermo in these works. In particular, the defensive structures that protect that region against enemy attacks provided important clues about strategic locations. Thus, while the painters depicted the naval battles of the period, they also documented the strategic importance of the region. Sometimes the point of the battle is shown differently, as in Dutch artist Jacobus Robijn's engraving of *The Naval Battle of Stromboli* (1676). Sometimes an erroneous geographical action is depicted just to refer to the area where the battle took place. For example, in every painting where the Battle of Stromboli is the subject, the mountain that gives its name to the struggle is depicted in an erupted state. However, the volcano was not active during the years of the war. This situation misleads the audience.

The artists probably made these paintings to order. Especially the engravings in the almanacs confirm this. For example, Sébastien Leclerc, serving as Louis XIV's painter, painted both the battles of Augusta and Palermo. The same situation is true for Théodore Gudin and Ambroise Louis Garneray. Because both painters undertook the court painters of the Emperor of France Napoleon III. They were even assigned the official painter of the French navy with the title of *Peintre de la Marine*. In other words, with the support of their patrons, the artists produced these works with the feeling of praising the bravery and heroism of the military, reflecting the victory, and gaining independence. On the one hand, they added political messages to the paintings, on the other hand, they contributed to the historical painting of the period.

The last engagement of the Franco-Dutch War in the Western Mediterranean was the Battle of Palermo dated 1676. This battle was recorded as one of the biggest naval wars ever fought in Sicily and its surroundings. The battle, which affected the outcome of the Franco-Dutch War, is very important for the future of the Mediterranean. Therefore, there are more visual examples of the Battle of Palermo than the others. Because the victory of the French in almost every struggle has been a great threat to other states that want to enter the Mediterranean. As stated in the detail of Palermo in Nicolas Bonnart's engraving of the Siege of Bouchain, this battle is the biggest battle fought in the Mediterranean after Lepanto. In fact, after these events, naval supremacy in the region passed from Spain to France, albeit for a while. Therefore, this image, which engraved the invincibility of the Spanish navy in the Mediterranean, was destroyed by these visual documents and left its place to other states. Moreover, it is usual to celebrate the victory of the French with such pictures. Because this prestige achieved in the Mediterranean is visualized through such works. Then it was projected to the whole world as a symbol of victory.

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